

NATIONAL DROUGHT POLICY COMMISSION

Analysis of Existing Tribal Programs

Background

Public Law 105-99, 112 Stat. 641, provides, "*Sec. 4 DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION. (a)(2) review State, local, and tribal laws and programs related to drought that the Commission finds pertinent.*"

Methodology

The Intertribal Agriculture Council surveyed their membership. The Natural Resources Conservation Service of USDA, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the Commission performed outreach activities in attempts to develop information. Supplemental data was gathered from public testimony and comments.

Overview

There are approximately 560 federally recognized Indian tribes located within the United States - 306 in the conterminous 48 states. Two hundred eighty nine are west of the Mississippi River, where 95 percent of all Indian trust land is located. Most tribes rely on their own disaster systems and processes which often count heavily on the existing Federal programs (Federal Emergency Management Agency Stafford Act, Agriculture, etc.).

Many tribal lands lack current soil survey, streamgaging, and range condition information. Some tribes indicated that they lack access to snow amount, soil moisture, and stream flow information needed in planning and for triggering emergency response efforts. Many tribes noted the need for technical and financial assistance to effectively plan and implement conservation measures and other practices to enhance wildlife and protect against wildfire. They emphasized that this assistance must be easily and locally accessible to tribal members. Most tribal representatives explained that current programs require modifications in eligibility criteria and cost-share rates to address specific tribal situations and that programs must be adequately funded.

Some tribes are using planning as a viable means of lessening the impacts of drought on tribal lands and populations. Others expressed their concerns that criteria for national drought policy might compromise their cultural or religious beliefs and specifically asked that this not occur. They asked the Commission to support the special relationship that tribes have with the Federal Government.

As a result of the outreach effort, we found that six (6) tribes—the Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Nation, Kaibab-Paiute Tribe, Navajo Nation, San Carlos Apache Tribe, and Zuni Pueblo—are in the process of developing drought contingency plans through cooperative agreements with the Bureau of Reclamation. It remains unknown how many others may be developing plans on their own initiative.

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Based on the information received, the current state of tribal drought activity appears to be shifting toward an emphasis on preparedness and mitigation. Previously, tribal drought activities focused on response. Recently, tribes have begun to develop comprehensive drought contingency plans; however, our survey found that only six had initiated these planning efforts.

Additional information is available from the National Drought Policy Commission. You can access the information at the Commission's web site: www.fsa.usda.gov/drought. All files can be ordered in electronic format or hard copy. Write: National Drought Policy Commission, USDA/FSA/AO, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Mail Stop 0501, Washington, D.C. 20250-0501.

* A list of acronyms used in this file will print at the end of the report or the meanings for individual acronyms will display at the web site by clicking on the acronym.